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Fishing Regulations

Yellowstone National Park

ATTENTION ANGLERS

Yellowstone fisheries are threatened by two potentially damaging exotic organisms. Whirling disease has been implicated in the decline of wild trout in the Madison River in Montana outside of the park. The New Zealand Mud Snail, which occurs in the Firehole and the Madison Rivers, may harm aquatic insect communities. Please help prevent further spread of these invaders by thoroughly cleaning mud, plants, and debris from your fishing equipment, and inspecting footwear before leaving your angling site. Drain livewells and only clean fish in the same body of water in which they were caught. Report sightings of the tiny (less than 1/4 inch) black snails to a park ranger.

Revised March 1998

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Yellowstone National Park

ATTENTION ANGLERS

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Revised March 1998

Fishing in YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK

Yellowstone National Park is managed as a natural area to protect plants, wildlife, geology, and scenery. Angling has been a major visitor activity for over a century. Present regulations reflect the park's primary purposes of resource protection and visitor use. The objectives of the fishing program are to:

1. Manage aquatic resources as an important part of the park ecosystem.
2. Preserve and restore native fishes and their habitats.
3. Provide recreational fishing opportunities for the enjoyment of park visitors, consistent with the first two objectives.

In Yellowstone, bald eagles, ospreys, pelicans, otters, grizzly bears, and other wildlife take precedence over humans in utilizing fish as food. None of the fish in Yellowstone are stocked, and populations depend on a sufficient number of spawning adults to maintain natural reproduction and genetic diversity. In Yellowstone National Park, we place less emphasis upon providing fishing for human consumption and put more emphasis upon the quality of recreational fishing. Anglers, in return, have the opportunity to fish for wild trout in a natural setting.

Because of the increasing number of anglers in the park, more restrictive regulations have been adopted in Yellowstone. These restrictions include season opening/closing dates, restrictive use of bait, catch-and-release only areas, and number/size limits according to species. A few places are closed to the public to protect threatened and endangered species, sensitive nesting birds, and to provide scenic viewing areas for visitors seeking undisturbed wildlife.

Yellowstone National Park has implemented a non-toxic fishing program. Nationwide, over three million waterfowl die each year from lead poisoning through ingestion. Because lead from fishing tackle concentrates in aquatic environments, tackle such as leaded split shot sinkers, weighted jigs, and soft weighted ribbon for fly fishing are prohibited. Only non-toxic alternatives to lead are allowed.

Releasing Fish

The following suggestions will insure that a released fish has the best chance for survival.

1. Play fish as rapidly as possible, do not play to total exhaustion.
2. Keep fish in water as much as possible when handling and removing hook.
3. Remove hook gently—do not squeeze fish or put fingers in gills. The use of barbless hooks is encouraged to make release easier.
4. If deeply hooked—cut line—do not pull hook out. Most fish survive with hooks left in them.
5. Release fish only after its equilibrium is maintained. If necessary, gently hold fish upright, facing upstream.
6. Release fish in quiet water, close to the area where it was hooked.

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SPECIES REGULATIONS AND DESCRIPTIONS

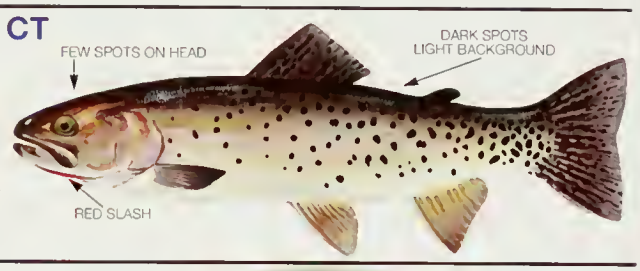
The Fishing Map (on reverse side) indicates known locations of fish species within the boundaries of Yellowstone National Park. This map is provided as an aid to anglers seeking sport of a particular species, and does not imply a legal basis for species distribution. IT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE ANGLER TO BE ABLE TO DISTINGUISH ONE FISH SPECIES FROM ANOTHER.

Cutthroat Trout – CT

REGULATION

Parkwide: CATCH AND RELEASE ONLY except for:

1. Yellowstone Lake and tributaries beginning July 15, two fish UNDER 13 inches.
2. The Lamar River upstream from Calfee Creek, and all tributaries above and including Calfee Creek: TWO FISH, ANY SIZE.



Grayling – GY

REGULATION

Parkwide: CATCH AND RELEASE ONLY

Mountain Whitefish – MW

REGULATION

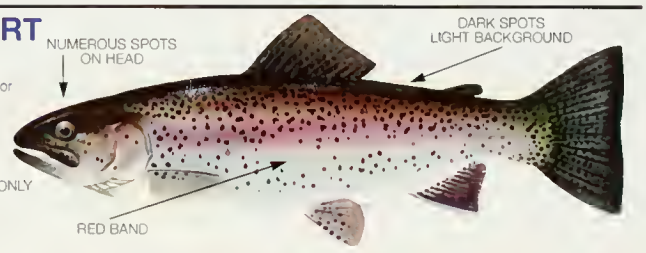
Parkwide: TWO FISH, ANY SIZE.

Rainbow Trout – RT

REGULATION

Parkwide: TWO FISH, ANY SIZE, except for:

1. Madison River, Firehole River and its tributaries, and Gibbon River BELOW Gibbon Falls: CATCH AND RELEASE ONLY.
2. Bechler River: CATCH AND RELEASE ONLY.

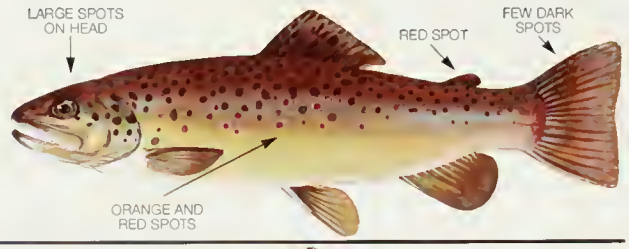


Brown Trout – BN

REGULATION

Parkwide: TWO FISH, ANY SIZE, except for:

1. Madison River, Firehole River and its tributaries, and Gibbon River BELOW Gibbon Falls: two fish UNDER 13 inches.
2. Lewis River proper below Lewis Falls: CATCH AND RELEASE ONLY.

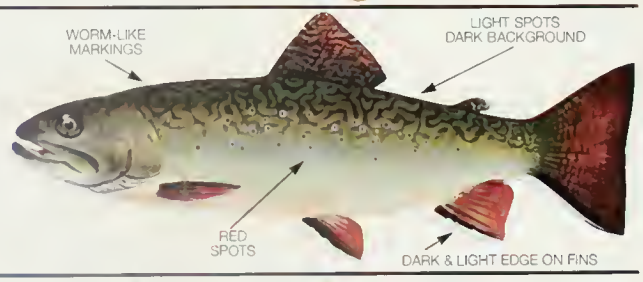


Brook Trout – BK

REGULATION

Parkwide: FIVE FISH, ANY SIZE except for:

1. Richard's Pond, Fawn Lake, Blacktail Pond: five fish, all UNDER 13 inches.
2. Pocket Lake: All brook trout caught must be kept and not released. There is no daily limit.



Lake Trout – LT

REGULATION

Parkwide: TWO FISH, ANY SIZE, except for:

1. Yellowstone Lake and Heart Lake: ALL lake trout caught must be KEPT AND NOT RELEASED. Lake trout caught on Yellowstone Lake must be kept intact and presented to a ranger at either the Grant Village, Bridge Bay, or Lake Ranger Stations as soon as is practical (the fish may be kept by the angler after verifying identification with a ranger). There is no size or possession limit on lake trout caught in Yellowstone Lake or Heart Lake.

BEARS, BACKCOUNTRY AND ANGLERS

Yellowstone is bear country, and there is no guarantee of your safety. Bears often utilize trails, streams, and lakeshores. Entry into some areas may be restricted; check with a ranger for specific bear management information. Traveling alone in bear country is not recommended. Make enough noise to make your presence known to bears. If you should encounter a bear, give it plenty of room, detour if possible, or wait for the bear to move on. If a bear should charge or attack and the situation allows, climb a tree. If you are caught by a bear, try playing dead. Do not run, this may excite the bear. Carefully read all bear country guidelines and regulations and be prepared for any situation.

GARBAGE DISPOSAL AND FISH CLEANING

Please pick up all trash, including items such as monofilament fishing line and six pack holders, which may cause injury to wildlife, and properly dispose in trash receptacles. When fish cleaning and disposal facilities are not provided, dispose of fish entrails by puncturing the air bladder and dropping into deep water.

BOAT — FLOAT TUBES

A Boat Permit is required for all types of vessels (FLOAT TUBES ARE CLASSIFIED AS VESSELS. THEY ARE NOT ALLOWED ON ANY RIVER OR STREAM IN YELLOWSTONE EXCEPT THE LEWIS RIVER BETWEEN LEWIS AND SHOSHONE LAKES) and must be obtained in person at any of the following locations: South Entrance, Lewis Lake Campground, Grant Village Backcountry Office, Bridge Bay Marina and Lake Ranger Station. Non-motorized permits only may be obtained at Mammoth Backcountry Office, Canyon Backcountry Office, Northeast Entrance, and Bechler Ranger Station. Fees are charged for both motorized and non-motorized boat permits.

Yellowstone National Park Fishing Regulations

A. GENERAL REGULATIONS

1. **FISHING PERMITS AND GENERAL FISHING SEASON**
   - a **FISHING PERMITS**: Anyone 12 years of age or older must have a valid Yellowstone National Park fishing permit to fish in the park. A fishing permit is valid only if signed by the permittee. A permit fee is charged for anyone 16 years of age or older. Children 11 years of age or younger may fish without a permit when supervised by an adult. **The adult is responsible for the child's actions.**
   - b Park Rangers may check for permits, inspect tackle and fish, and inspect creels and/or other containers where fish or tackle may be stored.
   - c. **GENERAL FISHING SEASON** in Yellowstone National Park is open each day from 5 am to 10 pm, beginning on the Saturday of Memorial Day weekend through and including the first Sunday in November. **There are several area-specific exceptions to the general opening date as noted in SECTION B.**

2. **GENERAL TACKLE AND BAIT RESTRICTIONS**
   - a **Each angler may use only one rod or line,** which must be held in hand.
   - b. **Only artificial lures and flies may be used.** No natural or organic bait such as salmon eggs, worms, insects, or foodstuffs is allowed. Scented attractants are illegal.
   - c **Lures may have only one hook.** The hook may have a single, double, or treble configuration. No fish snagging is allowed.
   - d. **Flies may have only one hook with a single point. Up to two flies may be used on a single leader.**
   - e **Leaded fishing tackle** such as leaded split-shot sinkers, weighted jigs (lead molded to a hook), and soft lead-weighted ribbon for nymph fishing **are not allowed.**

3. **GENERAL SIZE AND POSSESSION LIMITS**
   - a **Size and possession limits vary by species and area. The maximum number of fish an angler can keep is five fish per day (not counting lake trout from Yellowstone or Heart Lake, or brook trout from Pocket Lake) of which at least three must be brook trout.** An angler must cease fishing immediately after filling his/her possession limit except on Yellowstone Lake (see Section B, 1 g.). Possession limits include all fish, whether fresh, stored in freezers/ice chests or otherwise preserved.
   - b. **Fish that do not meet the specified size restrictions** must be returned carefully and immediately to the waters from which they were taken. Unintentionally killed fish should also be returned to the water so that they can be consumed by wildlife. **It is the responsibility of the angler to be able to measure fish lengths and to identify fish by species.**

4. **GENERAL CLOSURES:** No fishing from any road bridge or boat dock.

B. AREA-SPECIFIC REGULATIONS

1. **YELLOWSTONE LAKE AND ITS TRIBUTARIES (STREAMS FLOWING INTO THE LAKE)**
   - a **Fishing season in Yellowstone Lake opens June 1.**
   - b **Streams flowing into Yellowstone Lake and areas within 100 yards of these streams' outlets open on July 15.**
   - c. Clear and Cub creeks open **August 11** due to bear activity.
   - d **Areas permanently closed to fishing include:**
     - i. **Pelican Creek** from its outlet to a point two miles upstream (to protect wildlife)
     - ii. The **shoreline** of Yellowstone Lake from **West Thumb Geyser Basin to Little Thumb Creek** (to protect fragile geothermal resources)
     - iii. **Bridge Bay Marina/Harbor and Grant Village Marina/Harbor** and their connecting channels into Yellowstone Lake.
   - e **Beginning July 15, anglers may keep two cutthroat trout UNDER 13" in Yellowstone Lake and its tributaries.**
   - f. **ALL lake trout caught in Yellowstone Lake must be kept and not released.** The fish must be kept intact and presented to a ranger (the angler may keep the fish after a ranger verifies identification)
   - g To continue catch and release fishing on Yellowstone Lake, an angler may possess no more than two cutthroat trout and/or any number of lake trout.

2. **THE YELLOWSTONE RIVER AND ITS TRIBUTARIES BETWEEN CHITTENDEN BRIDGE (NEAR CANYON) AND YELLOWSTONE LAKE**
   - a. **Fishing season opens July 15.**
   - b. This area is **CATCH AND RELEASE ONLY.**
   - c Areas permanently closed to fishing include:
     - i. **Fishing Bridge,** including an area one mile downstream (toward Canyon) and one-quarter mile upstream (toward Yellowstone Lake) of the bridge
     - ii The **Yellowstone River and its tributary streams** through **Hayden Valley**: from the confluence of Alum Creek upstream (toward Yellowstone Lake) to Sulphur Caldron
     - iii. The **Yellowstone River** for 100 yards upstream and downstream of **LeHardy Rapids.**
     - iv The entire west channel of the **Yellowstone River** near the road at **Buffalo Ford.**

3. **THE MADISON RIVER, FIREHOLE RIVER, AND GIBBON RIVER (DOWNSTREAM FROM GIBBON FALLS)**
   - a These three rivers proper (not including the tributaries) are restricted to **fly-fishing only** (artificial flies only may be used to attract and catch fish regardless of the type of rod or line)
   - b **Anglers may keep two brown trout UNDER 13"** in the Madison, Firehole, and Gibbon rivers proper and the tributaries to the Firehole River
   - c **CATCH AND RELEASE ONLY for rainbow trout on the Madison River, the Firehole River and its tributaries, and the Gibbon River below Gibbon Falls.**
   - d **The Firehole River** from the road bridge one-half mile upstream of Old Faithful to the road bridge at Biscuit Basin (two and one-half miles downstream of Old Faithful) is closed to fishing

4. MISCELLANEOUS AREA-SPECIFIC REGULATIONS:
   - a. **The Yellowstone River,** from Chittenden Bridge downstream through the **Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone** to a point directly below Silver Cord Cascade, is closed to fishing
   - b **Agate and Cottonwood creeks,** and portions of the Yellowstone River within 100 yards of these creeks, open to fishing on July 15.
   - c **Trout, Shrimp, and Buck lakes,** and their connecting waters, open to fishing on June 15. The inlet (stream that drains into) to Trout Lake opens to fishing on July 15
   - d **CATCH AND RELEASE ONLY FOR RAINBOW TROUT on the Bechler River.**
   - e **The Lamar River upstream from Calfee Creek** and all tributaries upstream from and including Calfee Creek anglers may keep two cutthroat trout, any size
   - f Children 11 years of age or younger may fish with worms as bait on the **Gardner River, Obsidian, Indian, and Panther creeks, and Joffe Lake.**
   - g **Sylvan Lake** opens to fishing on July 15
   - h **The Lewis River proper below Lewis Falls: catch and release only for brown trout.**
   - i. **Heart Lake** opens to fishing on July 1 due to bear activity. All lake trout caught on **Heart Lake** must be kept and not released
   - j. The daily creel limit for brook trout on **Richard's Pond, Fawn Lake, and Blacktail Pond** is five fish under 13"
   - k All brook trout caught in **Pocket Lake** must be kept and not released
   - l All waters in the park not mentioned in the AREA-SPECIFIC REGULATION Section are regulated by the general fishing regulations and the species regulations.

Species Regulations

CT Cutthroat Trout
Regulation: Parkwide CATCH AND RELEASE except for
1. Beginning July 15, anglers may keep two cutthroat trout under 13" in Yellowstone Lake and its tributaries
2. The Lamar River upstream from Calfee Creek and all tributaries above and including Calfee Creek: two fish any size

GY Grayling
Regulation: Parkwide CATCH AND RELEASE ONLY

MW Mountain Whitefish
Regulation: Parkwide TWO FISH, ANY SIZE

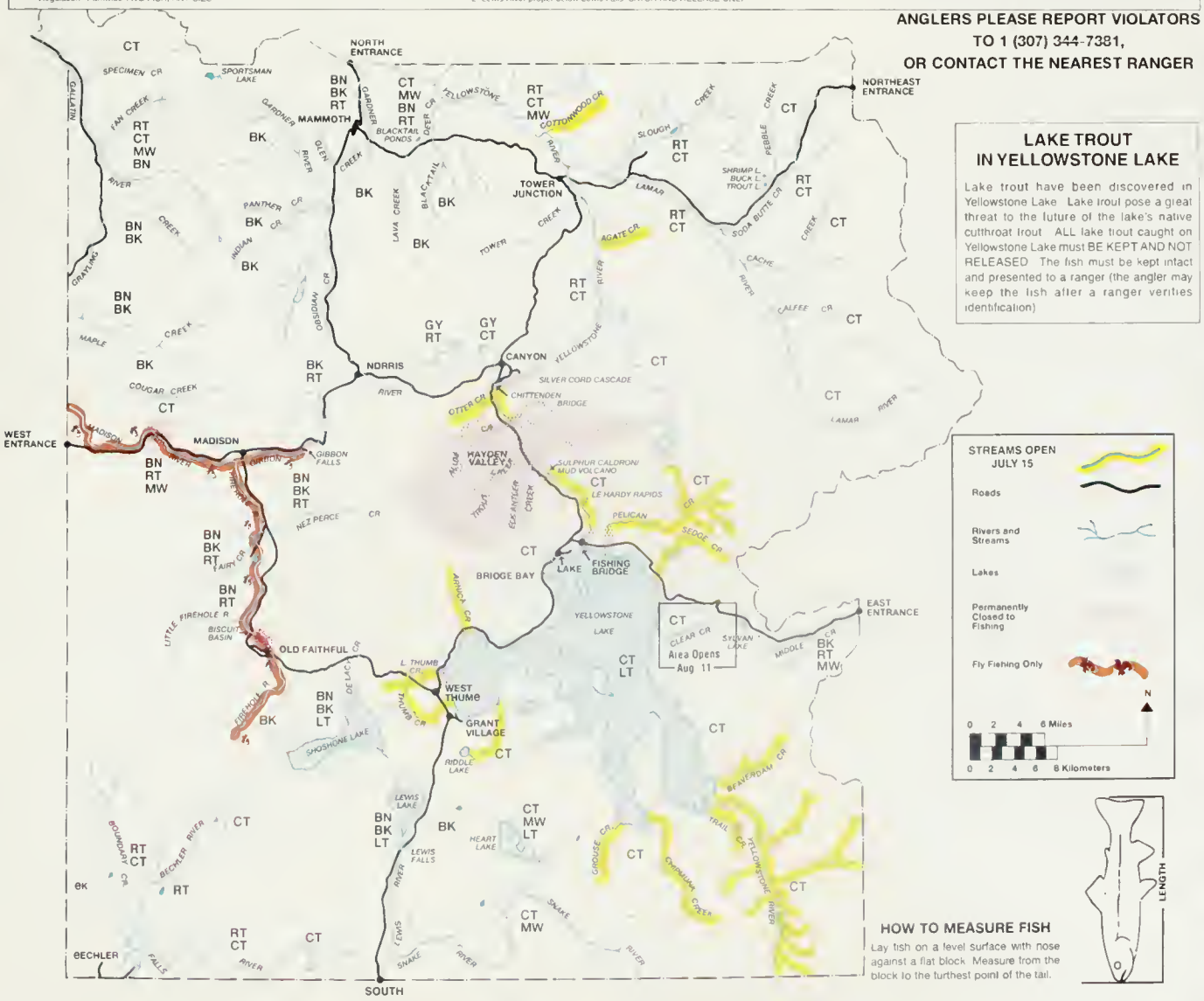
RT Rainbow Trout
Regulation: Parkwide TWO FISH ANY SIZE except for
1. Madison River, Firehole River and its tributaries and Gibbon River BELOW Gibbon Falls CATCH AND RELEASE ONLY
2. Bechler River CATCH AND RELEASE ONLY

BN Brown Trout
Regulation: Parkwide TWO FISH ANY SIZE except for
1. Madison River, Firehole River and its tributaries, and Gibbon River BELOW Gibbon Falls TWO FISH UNDER 13"
2. Lewis River proper below Lewis Falls CATCH AND RELEASE ONLY

BK Brook Trout
Regulation: Parkwide FIVE FISH ANY SIZE except for
1. Richard's Pond, Fawn Lake, Blacktail Pond FIVE FISH ALL UNDER 13"
2. All brook trout caught in Pocket Lake must be kept and not released

LT Lake Trout
Regulation: Parkwide TWO FISH ANY SIZE except for
1. Yellowstone Lake and Heart Lake ALL lake trout caught must be KEPT AND NOT RELEASED. Lake trout caught on Yellowstone Lake must be kept intact and presented to a ranger as soon as practical (the angler may keep the fish after a ranger verifies identification)

ANGLERS PLEASE REPORT VIOLATORS TO 1 (307) 344-7381, OR CONTACT THE NEAREST RANGER



LAKE TROUT IN YELLOWSTONE LAKE

Lake trout have been discovered in Yellowstone Lake. Lake trout pose a great threat to the future of the lake's native cutthroat trout. ALL lake trout caught on Yellowstone Lake must BE KEPT AND NOT RELEASED. The fish must be kept intact and presented to a ranger (the angler may keep the fish after a ranger verifies identification)

HOW TO MEASURE FISH

Lay fish on a level surface with nose against a flat block. Measure from the block to the furthest point of the tail.